



PLANNING COMMISSION

Department of Urban Planning & Design • P.O. Box 27210 • Tucson, AZ 85726-7210

DATE: January 18, 2007

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Albert Elias, AICP, Executive Secretary

SUBJECT: *Grant-Alvernon Area Plan Amendment, PA-07-01*
Alvernon/Lee – Commercial
Study Session (Ward 6)

Issue: This is a request by Don Laidlaw, on behalf of the property owner, CS&Z Holdings, Inc., to amend the *Grant-Alvernon Area Plan (GAAP)* to allow an area designated on the Conceptual Land Use Map for residential and office purposes to be used for commercial purposes. CS&Z Holdings owns four contiguous parcels at the northeast corner of Alvernon Way and Lee Street. The two northern parcels are zoned C-1, and the two southern ones R-2. They want to rezone the two southern parcels to C-1, and construct a culinary institute, which will be part of Chaparral College, on all four parcels.

A copy of the location map is provided as Attachment A. A copy of the zoning and land use map is provided as Attachment B. A copy of a portion of the *GAAP* Conceptual Land Use Map is provided as attachment C. A copy of an aerial photograph of the site and surrounding areas is provided as Attachment D. A copy of the plan amendment application is provided as Attachment E.

Recommendation: Staff recommends the Planning Commission set this item for public hearing at the February meeting.

Applicant's Request: The applicant wants to revise the *GAAP* conceptual land use map to allow office, commercial and high-density residential land uses on the amendment site. Currently, office and high-density residential uses are allowed (see Attachment C - *GAAP* Conceptual Land Use Map).

Background Information: The *GAAP* was adopted in September 1999, for an area bounded by Fort Lowell and Grant Roads on the north, Speedway Boulevard on the south, Columbus and Swan Road on the east, and Country Club on the west. Development occurred generally from the mid 1940's, near Speedway and Country Club, to the early 1960's, near Fort Lowell and Columbus, with newer townhomes constructed near Fort Lowell and Columbus in the late 1970's.

The predominant land use in the plan area is medium-density, single-family residential, in the interior of neighborhoods and along some of the major streets; and office, commercial, and high-density residential along the arterials. As in much of the Mid-City, this area is experiencing a conversion of low-density residential development along arterial streets to non-residential (commercial and office) uses, due to increased vehicular traffic and related issues.

January 18, 2007

Since it was adopted, this plan has been amended twice. In November 2000, an amendment and subsequent rezoning allowed the expansion of commercial uses along Alvernon at Fairmount Street, one block south of the subject site (C9-01-03, Assistance League of Tucson, R-3 to C-1). That amendment was similar to the one currently proposed. The other amendment allowed Tucson Botanical Gardens to expand eastward as a special exception cultural use in the R-1 zone.

Policy Direction: The City of Tucson's *General Plan (GP)* and the *GAAP* provide policy guidance for proposed land use changes. *GP* policies are long-term, broad-based, and apply to the entire City, whereas *GAAP* policies are more narrowly focused and apply only in the plan area. A summary of relevant land use plan policy direction follows. A listing of applicable policies is provided as Attachment F.

The *GP* supports commercial redevelopment within the urbanized Tucson area if it is compatible with adjacent uses, including established residential uses. Conversion of residential structures to nonresidential uses is supported if access can generally be provided from a major street; parking, loading and maneuvering can be provided onsite; and the project stabilizes and enhances the transition edge. Expansion of commercial areas into adjoining residential areas is supported if a logical boundary can be established, and adjacent residential properties can be adequately screened and buffered.

An overall goal of the *GAAP* is to improve the visual appearance of the plan area. Consistent with *GP* policy, commercial development is to have primary access to an arterial street. Commercial and office buildings are to be concentrated towards the street frontage when adjacent to residential areas.

Existing Zoning and Land Use:

Alvernon from Speedway to Grant is developed with miscellaneous commercial, and single- and multi-family residential uses, mostly in older buildings. The land uses reflect the zoning, which is a mix of C-1 and R-2, with R-1 and less R-3. An area zoning map is provided as Attachment G.

The project site consists of four vacant parcels on the eastern side of Alvernon south of Pima Street. The southern two parcels along Lee Street were recently cleared of dilapidated residences. To the east are single- and multi-family residences in R-2 zoning. The property that would be most impacted is developed with a single-family residence along Lee Street east of and adjoining the amendment site.

To the southeast across Lee Street are multi-family residences in R-2 zoning. South of the amendment site are vacant C-1 parcels. Across Alvernon to the southwest are single- and multifamily residential uses in R-2 zoning. To the west and northwest are single- and multi-family residences, and a business, mostly in C-1 zoning (see Attachment B – Zoning and Land Use Map).

January 18, 2007

Public Contact: As of January 4, 2006, staff has not received any comments from the public about the proposed amendment.

Conclusion: Like many arterial streets in the Mid-City, Alvernon in this area is developed with commercial uses at major intersections, and residential uses in the interior of block edges. As Tucson has grown and traffic has increased, older residential uses on arterial streets have become less viable. In some cases, this has led to poorly maintained, underutilized properties that detract from the neighborhood's and the community's well-being. Combining lots to redevelop these sites with higher-density residential or nonresidential uses is expected to continue, as part of the overall gentrification process affecting older land uses along major streets in the central Tucson area.

GP policies provide guidance for the conversion of residential structures to nonresidential uses along arterial streets, and the expansion of commercial areas into adjoining residential areas. *GAAP* policies provide guidance for new commercial development so that it complements the scale and character of adjacent areas. Policies allow for consolidation of abutting residential parcels with nonresidential uses subject to several criteria.

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission set this item for public hearing in February. Staff will review this proposal and make a recommendation to the Commission based on *GP* and *GAAP* policies, information provided by the applicant, and other relevant information.

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Attachments: A – Location Map
B – Zoning and Land Use Map
C – *GAAP* Conceptual Land Use Map
D – Aerial Photograph of Site and Surroundings
E – Amendment Application
F – Land Use Plan Policies
G – Zoning Map: Alvernon, Speedway to Grant